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Approved For Release 2003/04/24 : CIA-RDP79S01057A000500020016-9

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NSC REVIEW
COMPLETED

DOCUMENT NO. 26
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐
DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C192C 10 June 1953
NEXT REVIEW DATE:
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE 4-26-86 REVIEWER:

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Acting Director
Psychological Strategy Board

SUBJECT : Comments on Draft Speech concerning Atomic Matters

This memorandum contains my comments as CIA Representative on the NSC Ad Hoc Committee dealing with Armaments and American Policy. I have consulted fully with the offices of this agency most directly concerned with this problem -- in particular with the Chairman of the Joint Atomic Energy Intelligence Committee -- and the comments under the heading "Intelligence" are believed to be authoritative. Comments under the heading "General" are personal and do not purport to represent the views of the Director of Central Intelligence or of CIA as a whole.

Intelligence

1. Page 3, fourth paragraph. The statement that we estimate the Russians will have "X" (the critical number) of bombs within two years is more precise as to the time period, for any assumed value of "X", than is warranted by available intelligence. Paragraphs 4 a and 6 e of the Annex to NSC 151 contain precisely framed wordings that might be used, with accuracy and without compromise of intelligence sources. For purposes of the present speech, recommend deletion of the "X" idea and use of the general statement in paragraph 4 a of the Annex, together with a statement of present general capability, as follows:

"We estimate that the Soviets now have a supply of atomic weapons sufficient, if delivered on targets in the U.S., -- I repeat, if delivered on targets -- to injure the U.S. seriously, both in physical damage and in loss of life. Furthermore, the time is coming, within a very few years, when the Soviet supply will be sufficient, again if delivered on target, to injure us to a critical degree, in other words so that there would be doubt as to our ability to recover and to carry on the war thus forced on us."

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This statement is perhaps the most important single thought of the whole speech. So far as we know, it has not been said authoritatively from any source, although General Vandenberg and others have come close. Thus, it is likely to be quoted extensively, and should be as explicit as necessary even at the expense of brevity. (Length may also tend to diminish over-dramatic reactions.) Moreover, the statement's stress on "if delivered on target" leads at once to the question of delivery.

2. Page 4, first paragraph. The range of Soviet guided missiles presently operational, which are of the V-1 type, is estimated to be about 100 miles, not "several hundred." Missiles with longer range are in prospect over a 3-5 year period, but the launching problems of these V-2 types may be considerable from submarines.

General

3. Plausible statement of the occasion for the speech. A great many people -- and foreign governments -- will be bound to ask: "Why is the President saying this now?" In the absence of a plausible explanation, extreme inferences may be drawn of US intentions, forthcoming developments on the US or Soviet side, etc. The most plausible possible explanation -- and one consistent with the estimated facts -- is that the Soviet atomic supply has now reached the point where for the first time it is a real threat to the US itself. With this it might also be said that the speech is not being made because of any specific development either in the immediate past or expected in the immediate future. This would help to build the idea that the problem is a long-term one. Moreover, by implication it deprecates the significance of thermonuclear developments, and may be as close as the speech can come to explicit mention of this. ("I want to put before you a picture that you must live with henceforth, and that will not change in its essentials regardless of detailed technical developments.")

4. Reference to security problem. Many Americans may be alarmed that the President is giving away secrets. This could be countered by an early statement that he will not say anything not already known to the Kremlin. (The Annex to NSC 151 was framed on this assumption.)

5. Treatment of the legitimacy of the weapon. The present draft's discussion of the "guilt complex" and the legitimacy of the atomic weapon seems a good deal too flat-footed even for the American public and would almost certainly have a bad reaction abroad. Suggest that the legitimacy point be covered (a) by including in the recital of US development statements that the use of the bomb shortened the last war (as already in draft) and that it is quite likely that only the bomb kept the general peace between 1945 and 1950; (b) by including at a later point the statement that in the existing circumstances the US must continue to regard the bomb as a proper weapon. The latter could come in the summary of US policies suggested in the following paragraph.

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6. Summary of broad US policies. The present draft might suggest to the listener that all he can do is go and join the Ground Observer Corps, or learn how to evacuate his city. In fact, the speech should seek to enlist his support for a whole broad policy involving at least three elements: (a) proper defense of the US; (b) maintenance of US strength and striking power, including the possible use of the atomic weapon; (c) continued efforts for peace. Perhaps it was intended to deal with these broader points in the rest of the speech of which this draft would be a section. If so, the extensive specific reference to the Ground Observer Corps may detract from the broader picture desired. In any event, some summary of continuing US policy along these broad lines would appear to be highly desirable to follow the straight facts, both to channel the strong emotions aroused and to show the American people -- and the world -- that the speech is not meant per se to be a drastic change in basic policy.

7. More extensive treatment of US progress. Page 3 of the present draft gives no real indication of the magnitude of US progress. It was the belief of the Ad Hoc Committee that no authoritative single summary of this progress had been made -- or at least had got through -- to the American people, and paragraph 5 of the Annex to NSC 151 contains an extensive summary of what could be said. This could be shortened (and the specific thermonuclear references omitted) with the aim of getting across the basic idea that we have not been idle and that very rapid progress is possible, if not inevitable, in the atomic field. Moreover, such a summary would serve a useful security purpose when it came to stating the estimated Soviet capability, since it would permit us to say that our estimate is based on our own experience and on our knowledge that they have all the skill and materials we had when we started. (For a sequence of possible statements along this line, see paragraph 6 of the Annex to NSC 151.)

8. Reference to clandestine methods of delivery. So far as CIA is aware, there is no specific security objection to the treatment of possible clandestine methods of delivery. Query, however, as to the advisability of stressing this to the extent of the present draft (both the first paragraph of page 4 and putting internal security first among our action measures, ahead of early warning). Although there is some difference of opinion on the point, the Edwards Report tends to deprecate the importance of clandestine delivery. In any event, even if it is vastly more important than the Edwards Subcommittee believed, it is doubtful whether the public should be aroused by it in a speech designed primarily to get the broad picture across.

9. Soviet delivery capabilities. The second paragraph on page 4 could be reinforced by a specific lead-off statement that the Soviets "now have adequate means of intercontinental delivery" and that these will certainly improve in future. The Ad Hoc Committee felt that it was difficult to relate present and future estimates of Soviet bomber strength to estimates of the Soviet bomb stockpile without tipping our hand on one or the other. Hence, it is probably impossible to be more specific. But the simple statement may be the most effective presentation anyway, and can then be garnished to taste.

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10. Allaying fears of US allies. Apart from the point about legitimacy of the weapon, it may be desirable, for the sake of our allies alone, to reiterate the facts of our UN disarmament efforts and to repeat statements of the past that the US will not use the bomb in any aggressive war. The Ad Hoc Committee is now considering, of course, whether we can or should change existing policy on our governmental relations with allies. In the absence of a clear picture on this point (part of which involves Congressional action), it is probably wise to avoid wholly any reference that even suggests the problem of consultation before dropping, etc.

Trivia

11. Re page 3, first paragraph. The Truman announcement of 23 September 1949 referred only to an "atomic explosion" in the USSR, not to a bomb as such. Perhaps this reference should not be made specific. Perhaps also there should be an unmistakable statement that they do have the bomb, to counter the lingering effects of the Truman statement of January 1953.

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[Redacted]
CIA Representative
Ad Hoc Committee on
Armaments and American Policy

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